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SOCIOECONOMIC BARRIERS TO ACCESSING ANTI-VEGF TREATMENT IN PATIENTS WITH AMD, DMO, AND RVO

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Social determinants of health refer to non-medical factors that influence health outcomes and contribute to health inequalities. In progressive retinal conditions, including age-related macular degeneration (AMD), diabetic macular oedema (DMO), and retinal vein occlusion (RVO), access to intravitreal anti-VEGF is important for slowing disease progression and improving visual outcomes. This study aims to determine the effects of socioeconomic factors on the rate of deterioration of visual acuity (VA) and adherence to loading regimes in patients receiving anti-VEGF for AMD, DMO and RVO over a 14-year period.

In this retrospective London-based multi-centre observational cohort study we recorded VA, injection type and indication, and ocular comorbidity for each visit over a 14-year period. Additionally, we collected socioeconomic features including ethnicity, index of multiple deprivation, and distance of patients' home address from clinic. We used a multivariate regression analysis with SPSS software to determine association between factors.

Over a 14-year-period, 4,424 eyes from a cohort of 4,857 eyes (49,075 injections) received anti-VEGF treatment for AMD (n=2,246), DMO (n=1,449) or RVO (n=727). Number of injections given ranged from 1 to 133.
Preliminary results show that indices of deprivation including lower educational attainment, income rank and employment rank are associated with a faster reduction in VA in all disease cohorts ($p<0.05$). Distance from the clinic increases and systemic comorbidities including diabetes further increase deterioration in VA ($p<0.05$). There was no significant association between VA outcomes and ethnicity. Socioeconomic features are not significantly associated with completion of loading regimes.

Our results show increased rate of reduction in VA with greater distance from clinic and lower socioeconomic factors. These findings highlight the impact of accessibility barriers on treatment outcomes, and the need for interventions to improve healthcare access. Addressing these social determinants of health is important to ensure equal healthcare opportunities and optimise visual outcomes.